

What you need to know about:

Blood Pressure

What is blood pressure?

Blood Pressure is the force of blood against the walls of arteries. This force is recorded as two numbers. The systolic number is recorded on top and the diastolic number is recorded on the bottom.

What do the numbers mean?

The systolic pressure measures the force of the blood as the heart beats. The diastolic pressure measures this same force while the heart relaxes between beats. Both measurements are important to evaluate your blood pressure. Ideally, your blood pressure should be less than 120/80, but blood pressure can change for a variety of reasons, so do not be worried if your blood pressure is occasionally a little higher than this guideline. However, a blood pressure reading of 140/90 or greater is considered high and should be evaluated by your physician.

High blood pressure (hypertension) increases your chance for getting heart disease, kidney disease, and having a stroke. It is especially dangerous because it often has no warning signs. The good news is there are many changes you can make to control or prevent high blood pressure and, if necessary, there are also several medications available to help.

Category	Systolic	Diastolic
Normal	Less than 120	Less than 80
Pre hypertension	120-139	80-89
Hypertension: Stage 1	140-159	90-99
Hypertension: Stage 2	160 or higher	100 or higher

Your Blood Pressure: _____/_____ Date:____/____/____

What steps can I take to prevent and control high blood pressure?

Adopting healthy habits is an effective first step in both preventing and controlling high blood pressure.

- **Limit Sodium intake.** Healthy adults should reduce their sodium intake to no more than 2,300 milligrams per day. This is about the equivalent of one teaspoon of (table salt).
- * Reading food labels: choose foods that provide less than 10% of your daily allowance of sodium
- * Buying fresh, frozen, or canned "no salt added" vegetables
- * Taking the salt shaker off the table
- * Using half the salt called for in recipes



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- * Trying other seasonings: herbs and spices
- * Limiting or avoiding cured or smoked meats, crackers, pickles and potato chips
- * Rinsing salt from canned foods
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- **Quit Smoking**
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- **Maintain a healthy weight**—Being overweight puts you at risk for hypertension. Try to maintain a Body Mass Index (BMI) level between 18.5 and 24.9.
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- **Stay active**—Aim to get a total of at least 30 minutes of activity each day
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- **Limit Alcohol Use**—For men, limiting alcohol to two drinks (24 ounces of beer, 10 ounces of wine, or 2 ounces of 100-proof whiskey) per day. Women and lighter-weight people should limit alcohol to half that amount.
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- **Reduce Stress**
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- **Eat a healthy low-fat, high-fiber diet**—Guidelines that address heart healthy foods:
 - * No more than 8-10% of the day's total calories from saturated fat.
 - * 30% or less of the day's total calories from fat.
 - * Less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol a day.
 - * Limit sodium intake to 2,300 milligrams a day
 - * Include foods high in soluble fiber like oat bran, oatmeal, beans, peas, rice, bran, barley, citrus fruits, strawberries, apples, and whole grains in your diet.
 - * Just enough calories to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.
- **Consider medications**

Questions to ask your doctor if you have high blood pressure

- What is my blood pressure?
- What is my blood pressure goal?
- Is my systolic pressure too high?
- What would be a healthy weight for me?
- Is there a recommended healthy eating plan?
- Is it safe for me to exercise regularly?
- Do I need a blood pressure medication?
- What is my blood pressure medication?
- When and how should I take my blood pressure medication?
- What do I do if I forgot to take my medication?
- Are there any foods or beverages I should avoid with this medication?

